



Evaluation of the In Harmony Programme

Executive Summary

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for

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by

Nordicity

in association with

World Pencil





WorldPencil

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Executive Summary

In 2018, Arts Council England commissioned Nordicity, in association with World Pencil, to undertake an evaluation of the In Harmony programme. Building on the significant body of work in evaluating various components of In Harmony, this is the first evaluation of the programme as a whole. The objective of the evaluation was to address six research questions about the programme's impact on (i.) cultural sector engagement, (ii.) school culture and community, (iii.) social mobility, (iv.) education, (v.) scaling the programme, and (vi.) informing strategy and policy. The evaluation of In Harmony comprised a review of the programme's key impacts, areas of learning and recommendations.

Key impacts of the In Harmony programme

The evaluation identified a series of key impacts of the In Harmony programme assessed against the six research questions. Overall, the research has indicated that a creative education programme in the In Harmony model increases young people's well-being and helps them to manage stress. This has helped to increase concentration and improve behaviour – which in turn has a demonstrable impact on the school community and is believed to have an impact on achievement both in and out of school.

i. **Transferable Skills and Educational Performance**

Over the course of the research, participants of the focus group discussions attributed students' development of transferable skills to their participation in the In Harmony programme. The main transferable skills observed were confidence, resilience, teamwork, patience, perseverance and self-motivated learning. These skills have the potential to improve educational performance. In addition, positive impacts on listening and concentration were also noted as significant.

Other stakeholders in the programme agreed that the development of transferable skills by pupils and their impact on performance both in and out of school were a key outcome from the programme. Over 50% of students surveyed felt that In Harmony helped them to develop non-musical skills, and almost 40% felt that it benefitted their non-musical schoolwork.

ii. **Attainment**

The impact of the programme on formal assessments was considered in addition to its effect on educational performance. Though SAT data was inconclusive on the programme's effect on educational performance, there were no observed adverse effects on achievement despite significant curriculum time spent on the In-Harmony programme. Instead, 100% of Headteachers reported that their school's Ofsted indicators had improved as a result of the In Harmony programme. Furthermore, it does not appear that In Harmony has had a negative effect on achievement—suggesting that the amount of curriculum spent on music has not impeded performance but has contributed to it.

iii. **Cultural confidence, social impact, social mobility and social justice**

Several dynamics were identified over the course of the research that were believed by participants to have a social impact, to have the potential to increase or improve students' social mobility, and to foster some notion of social justice on a community level.

Social Mobility and Social Justice

The Social Mobility Commission defines social mobility as “the link between a person’s occupation or income and the occupation or income of their parents. Where there is a strong link, there is a lower level of social mobility. Where there is a weak link, there is a higher level of social mobility.”¹ HM Government defines social justice as “about making society function better – providing the support and tools to help turn lives around.”² These two concepts are closely related, where social mobility aims to ensure “people are able to move up the social ladder, regardless of background...” and social justice aims to ensure that “everybody can put a foot on that ladder”.³

In this report we refer also to a broader ‘social impact’, meaning realising opportunities to make positive changes in society, or tackling issues in society.⁴

Some of these dynamics were linked to the perception that the cultural sector can be inaccessible, and that the programme could play a crucial role in giving young people a sense of ownership of and belonging within both cultural venues and public space, and a place within society as a whole. The programme was seen to have increased young people’s cultural capital by offering them an opportunity to engage with institutions that their communities might otherwise struggle to access. Indeed, parents and carers also noted that the programme made their families more likely to engage with culture.

Students were also believed to have increased their social confidence – teachers and headteachers observed that participating students were more confident in speaking to adults in comparison to other children. Students’ increased resilience was also believed to have the potential to increase their social mobility, as they had the skills to work and persevere in challenging situations.

Children’s aspirations were also observed to have been shaped by the In Harmony programme, as they had the exposure to creative careers and training opportunities that they might not have otherwise considered.

iv. Wellbeing and enjoyment of learning

Wellbeing and enjoyment of learning were considered important outcomes of the In Harmony programme. A majority of the parents and carers consulted with believed that their children’s confidence had improved and that their children enjoyed school more as a result of the programme. Indeed, nearly half of the students surveyed also believed that the programme had helped them to make new friends (44%).

v. Parents and carers’ perceptions of children’s learning and confidence

Perceptions of learning and confidence were identified as benefits of In Harmony. The vast majority of parents and carers surveyed believed that their children’s learning improved as a result of the

¹ Social Mobility Commission (SMC).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/social-mobility-commission/about>

² HM Government. Social Justice: Transforming lives. March 2012

³ Ibid. P4.

⁴ Based on the same definition in ‘Hitting the spot: music and social impact toolkit’, World Pencil 2019,

<https://www.worldpencil.net/music-and-social-impact-toolkit>

programme (84%). They also believed that their children's confidence had improved as a result of the programme. In addition, teachers believed that the programme made parents more engaged with the school.

Key activities and 'ingredients' of In Harmony programmes

The evaluation looked at 'how' the programme effected change by identifying and analysing its key activities and 'ingredients'. A total of 13 ingredients were assessed in-line with evidence of the programme outcomes. The common successful ingredients included building activity around elements of the orchestral paradigm, adopting a pedagogy and leadership style attached to orchestral music, providing pupils with instruments, the fact that the instruments were orchestral in nature, the ability to take the instruments home, learning orchestral music, taught by high-quality music leaders, providing pupils the ability to perform their music, playing music together in ensembles, providing access to cultural venues, teaching in a 'whole class' group setting where it becomes a school cultural norm, in some cases providing out-of-school opportunities, and engaging with parents and communities to be embedded locally.

Orchestral paradigm: building activity around elements of the orchestral paradigm, including orchestral instruments, orchestral repertoire, orchestral rehearsal structures, orchestral discipline, orchestral leadership, orchestral inspiration and, sometimes, orchestral hierarchies.

Music leadership style / pedagogy: varies fairly significantly across programmes but essentially rooted in pedagogic schools attached to orchestral and instrumental music learning – relatively from-the-front leadership, often demonstrative, some distributed leadership, and with strong emphasis on listening.

Instruments: all children having access to musical instruments, which require multiple simultaneous skills to be developed and deployed at once, take time and effort to master, and care to maintain and safeguard.

Orchestral instruments: those required to make up an orchestra, organised into traditional sections, with many schools focussing on one section alone.

Taking instruments home: having the responsibility for looking after something that is expensive, fragile, often relatively culturally foreign, and yours (at least to look after).

Orchestral music: the repertoire varies significantly across and within the programmes but Western Classical repertoire is a common thread and a key element of the cultural capital developed.

High-quality specialist music leaders: seen as a key element of the programme and its value, particularly for headteachers, and valued highly by children. Significantly, they need to be high-quality specialist music leaders, facilitators and educators, rather than primarily professional performing musicians.

Performances: opportunities to perform as ensembles, and sometimes as soloists, which provide a culmination for children's work, and a shared achievement, particularly for those who, initially at least, find performing on stage a scary prospect.

Ensembles: playing music together – creating a sound that couldn't be made alone, supporting each other in rehearsals and sharing the learning challenges together.

Cultural venues: access to venues which professional adults perform in, on stages that make performances special for children and families, and which build a sense of ownership of those venues and entitlement to visit them.

Whole cohort: music instrument learning that the whole class/cohort does (at least initially), establishing with time an expectation that it is a school cultural norm, and where children share the challenge and pride together.

Out-of-school: in some cases, such as after-school cross-locality ensembles, out-of-school In Harmony activity provides an important social/musical alternative to school life and a musical family; in some cases, it is a means of delivering the programme with less impact on the curriculum timetable.

Working with parents & communities: in most cases, In Harmony planning and activity is not just about working with children, but involves working with school leadership, staff, parents/families, communities, community and faith leaders and others, for it to be embedded successfully into cultures and communities.

Social impact as a programme element

The In Harmony programme has had a positive social impact on the communities it serves. Social impact can be considered an important programme element beyond its role as an ancillary benefit. Indeed, one of the key findings in this area is the need for Music Education Hubs (MEHs) to embrace an outlook that emphasises social outcomes as well as musical ones. These are findings from the evaluation that could be particularly useful and relevant to MEHs, and other arts education organisations that are looking to increase their social impact.

Local co-design and Variation

The evaluation highlights the importance of drawing on and adjusting the programme to the local context. Indeed, headteachers found the flexibility essential to making the programme a success. An increase in co-creation with schools could be further explored in the future of the programme.

Pedagogy and the orchestral paradigm

The orchestral paradigm brings with it, in In Harmony's deployment, some characteristics of orchestral leadership – based on careful listening and direction from the front and relatively didactic teaching, with an emphasis on a culture of discipline and respectful behaviours – that is tightly related to much of the programme's impact. The relationship between the pedagogical approach of the programme and orchestral ways of working is also highlighted in this report. The evaluators observed that the pedagogical approach of the programme had not been fully explored in previous research, noting that it is very important to the programme's success and related to many of the positive outcomes that it has had. In particular, the role of careful listening and direction from the front in an orchestra, as well as didactic teaching and a culture of discipline and respect is considered important.

Recommendations

A series of recommendations were developed as a result of the In Harmony evaluation. Whilst some In Harmony programmes are delivered by Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) and MEHs, where the learning and benefits are already shared, there is a distinct opportunity for NPOs and MEHs who are not already leading In Harmony Programmes.

How NPOs could benefit from In Harmony's experiences

- Foster long-term development impacts: In Harmony provides a series of findings related to the impacts that can be achieved through working with children and young people, and with schools, over a period of several years, including school culture change, and reaching a 'critical dose' that precipitates further outcomes.

- Leverage expert music leadership: In Harmony has found in many cases that having practitioners who are experts in facilitation, learning and leadership is more important than having those who are primarily professional performing musicians.

How NPOs could scale elements and impact of In Harmony

- NPOs would need funding with levels and structures comparable to In Harmony's funding, including from central and local funders, joint fundraising from schools, and donors/sponsors.
- NPOs could deploy and scale some or all of the 'Ingredients' of IH in their own learning programmes.
- NPOs could collaborate with Music Education Hubs to develop IH-style programmes.
- NPOs could learn from how IH has changed its host organisation partners and seek to effect similar 'change from within' themselves.

Differences between Music Education Hubs and In Harmony Provision

The evaluation identified notable differences between Whole Class Ensemble instrumental Teaching (WCET) in Music Education Hubs ('MEHs') and In Harmony provision. In particular:

- In Harmony strives for whole-school integration whereas Whole Class Ensemble instrumental Teaching (WCET) is often a relatively discrete in-class activity delivered by a visiting music teacher;
- In Harmony tends to be more intensive with far more contact and music-making time than a typical WCET programme;
- In Harmony tends to centre around an orchestra and students building together an ensemble whereas WCET often focusses on a single instrument learnt by a whole class together;
- In Harmony has a strong emphasis on students visiting and performing on professional concert platforms from the outset, which is not a feature common to WCET programmes.
- In Harmony is delivered differently across the six areas, including in those areas where it is led by a Music Education Hub/Music Service (Nottingham, Lambeth, Stoke/Telford).
- In Harmony has, to a varying extent and focus, more of a deliberate emphasis on social impact through musical experiences, than Music Education Hubs' funding brief.

How Music Education Hubs could benefit from In Harmony's experiences

- MEHs could learn from IH's experiences in helping schools with school-based priorities – a medium for school-Hub collaboration – using music, including parental engagement, developing pupil confidence, community engagement and development of cultural capital.
- MEHs could develop WCET activity which, as with IH, is more focussed around building ensembles and orchestras than specifically around learning instruments.
- MEHs could incorporate the inclusive models of progression which are often deployed in IH, as elsewhere in cultural education, which are built on a starting assumption of whole-cohort inclusion, as opposed to progressively having few pupils progress to higher-level activities.
- MEHs could also adopt some of the progression structures deployed in IH (many already are), including local area out-of-school ensembles.
- MEHs could encourage or support a greater degree of public performance, including in high-profile public venues, for all students.

- MEHs could borrow from In Harmony’s social impact experiences to enrich their musical activity programmes, and how they are undertaken.

How Music Education Hubs could scale elements and impacts of In Harmony

- For the degree of intervention time in IH, MEHs would need funding with levels and structures comparable to In Harmony’s funding, including from central and local funders, joint fundraising from schools, and donors/sponsors. MEHs could identify how their existing funding could be restructured or redistributed to begin to develop IH-style activity.
- MEHs should examine the IH programmes that are hosted in Music Education Hubs, including how those MEHs have changed their ways of working as a result of learnings from the programme.
- MEHs could deploy and scale some or all of the ‘Ingredients’ of IH in their own learning programmes.
- In Harmony could explore a form of ‘In Harmony Elements’, potentially with existing In Harmony hosts designing and running a series of pilots with other MEHs, and enthusiastic schools, on how elements of In Harmony could be deployed with different resources.
- In Harmony MEHs, other MEHs, and social impact specialists could work together to develop effective ways for centralising social impact into MEHs’ strategy and programming, building on insights from In Harmony and elsewhere.
- MEHs could collaborate with NPOs to develop IH-style programmes.
- MEHs could learn from how IH has changed its host organisation partners and seek to effect similar ‘change from within’ themselves.

How current In Harmony host partners could further scale and develop the programme

We recommend the following be developed within the current IH programme:

- Internal practice-sharing and dissemination of insights and solutions should be enhanced across the programme and between IH projects.
- External practice-sharing and dissemination should ensure that the findings and experiences of IH can be widely understood and built upon.
- Programme partners should share, examine and develop pedagogical discourse and expertise within and beyond the programme.
- Regular systemic monitoring and evaluation should be embedded across the programme to ensure that appropriate outcomes of the programme are robustly evaluated, including longitudinally.
- Social impact development should be leveraged to become a central part of the programme. This would mean that going beyond being an ancillary benefit, the social impact of In Harmony becomes a consistent area of analysis, development, and evaluation for programme partners. “Social impact” should be defined based on local community context, with a focus on increasing access to the arts, and leveraging this to create opportunities and increase community cohesion.
- ‘Born of local context’ should also become a more widespread or universal facet of the programme as it progresses: for maximising the impact in school engagement, school-based impact and likely sustainability of the programme.

How IH insights could be scaled within and through community music organisations

- Further analysis of the experiences, learning, progression and journeys of In Harmony music leaders could support the development of future music leaders, particularly those coming from classical music backgrounds, and supporting social impact through music.

How could funders and public policy makers further scale In Harmony impacts?

It is understood that further funding to support the current In Harmony programme has been announced. The array of outcomes and considerable impact that this, and other evaluations have found arising from the In Harmony Programme support that decision.

The recommendations within this evaluation should be reviewed by funders and policymakers who could be significant in supporting their execution:

Seeking to scale In Harmony through the Music Education Hub brief

- We recommend that social impact become a strongly emphasised or central aspect of the brief for Music Education Hubs, alongside musical development and achievement, and inclusion. The balance between these three focusses – musical, inclusion, and social impact – should be carefully balanced within the Hub brief.
- We recommend that within the Hub brief, MEHs have the flexibility and encouragement to invest in higher-intensity needs-based programmes within their portfolio, and to ensure some access to musical experiences for all children and young people.
- We recommend that MEHs are strongly encouraged and supported to take advantage of In Harmony Elements, toolkits, ingredients, dissemination strategies and other outputs from this research and the In Harmony programme at large.

Other strategies for scaling elements and impacts of In Harmony

We recommend that further development work should be undertaken particularly around:

- In Harmony Ingredients, based on the above list, and how, with insights and examples, the In Harmony projects have developed pragmatic ways to deploy and invoke those ingredients.
- Organisational changes that have taken place in the In Harmony host organisations. The stories of how these organisations have changed as a result of their hosting of the programme (e.g. in their working with schools, their development of social impact, their understanding of how to harness music for social impact) could be powerful in scaling the impacts of In Harmony by embedding a similar change kernel within other organisations as opposed to transferring elements of the programme.

To disseminate these recommendations, we suggest:

- Online and printable toolkits be produced for MEHs, NPOs and other relevant organisations, building on IH's experiences and turning them into practicable resources for others;
- An in-person dissemination strategy, through which in-person support (face-to-face, online, telephone etc.) is made available for those organisations who wish, in particular, to develop social impact through music and the arts for children, young people and communities.

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Nordicity provides research and evaluation, strategy, policy and economic analysis for the arts, cultural and creative industries.

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